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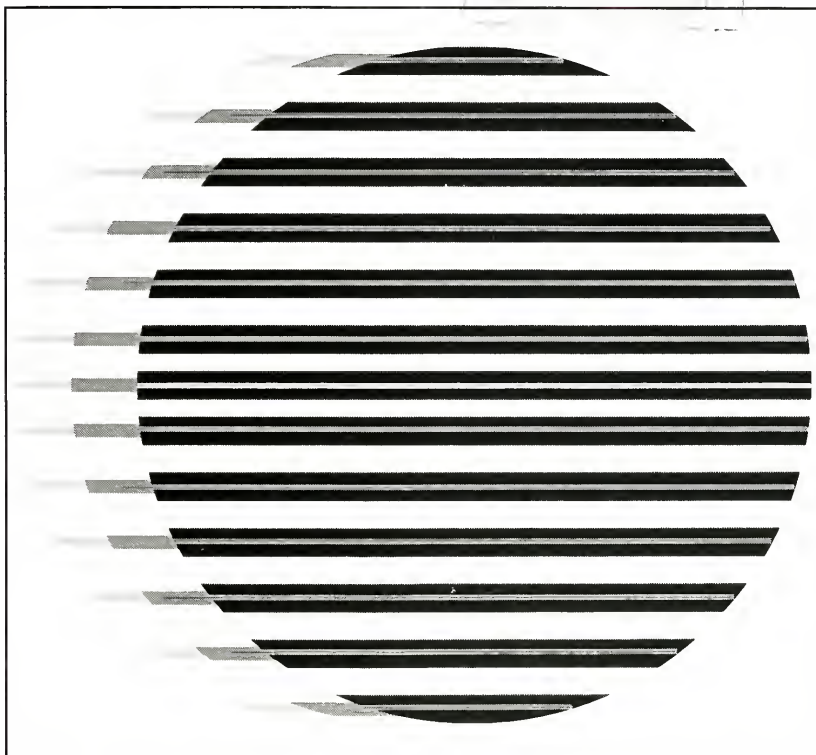
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# Computerized support for research and publication in contemporary history

## Databases at the 1956 Institute

The 1956 Institute was established in 1990 to research Hungarian history since the Second World War, including its international aspects. The primary subject of research was the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. This has steadily been extended back to the end of World War II and forward to the collapse of the socialist system.

Importance was attached from the outset to keeping a record of the documents encountered during the research. Data on the various source materials and literature were stored for later use by Institute staff or others, using the information systems available at the time. This was done in such a way that the database could be kept continually up to date and was sufficiently flexible to allow for changes of criteria or approach or the relinquishment of earlier criteria.

These requirements were considered while the databases for bibliography, video materials and oral history interviews were compiled. The document descriptions went well beyond the bounds of plain bibliographical data. With each type of document, related persons, institutions and events were recorded in a structured form, as 'related records' containing a biography, the date and place of an event, the persons concerned in it, and so on. Care was taken that either broad or detailed searches could be performed, for any of the recorded data or any combination of it, or for any words appearing in the data. Output for a required purpose can be prepared by defining various listing and printing formats. As for the structure of the databases, they could be operated either with the DOS operation system or in a network (Novell). However, this system was not suitable for storing or handling long texts such as oral history interviews.

## The database for oral history interviews

The Oral History Archive at the 1956 Institute contains about a 1000 life interviews. A little more than half of these are interviews made with people who took part in the 1956 Revolution. The rest, labelled 'leader interviews', were made with people who later held leading party, state and economic positions under the Kádár regime. The database so far has processed the 1956 interviews, by making abstracts of 5–10 pages that can be incorporated into the

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by Zoltán Lux\*

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database structure. Apart from the technical and administrative data (interviewer, length, accessibility *etc.*), three main groups of data have been recorded: 1. A description of the interviewee's life before the revolution (previous life). 2. A description of the interviewee's life since the revolution (subsequent life). 3. The interviewee's

activity during the revolution (events). The first two groups of data consist essentially of free text, with a maximum length of 4000 characters, in which it is possible to search for expressions marked and of course standardized when the text was introduced into the database. The 1956 events—activities during the revolution—consist of finely structured records (geographical location, exact location, institutions, participants, date, time, side-events *etc.*) These allow a very accurate search for memories of specific events.

## Trial records

As research continued, demand for incorporating other types of document into the database arose. About 13,000 trials took place in the country during the period of reprisals that followed the 1956 Revolution. These concerned more than 25,000 people, including a high proportion of the participants in previous and subsequent political and intellectual life. The trial records provide a great deal of biographical data on those prosecuted (origin, schooling, wealth and so on). Requisite analysis of a well-structured database allows otherwise impossible examinations to be made of participants in the revolution and characteristics of the reprisals. (For instance, what social groups and strata were worst hit? How were foreign observers able to keep track of the sentencing in protracted trials?) The first to be put into the database were the trial records of those who were executed and the data of those who were sentenced to death but the sentence was never carried out. At present, the database contains data on more than two thousand people concerned in the 56 trials.

## Chronology

The events are of interest to historians not just in the context of some document, but as distinct chronological events. So the databases have been compiled from the events as well as the documents. In other words, the events were the records incorporated into the database when a

period or subject was processed, and links were made, in many cases, to existing records of persons, books, articles, photographs and so on.

### **The photographic database**

Various audio-visual items—photographs, sound documents and films—appeared by chance with the documents. Apart from their undeniable value as source materials, there is strong outside demand for these as illustrations for publications of various kinds. Initially, only descriptions of these were incorporated into the database. Systematic processing and digitalization began about three years ago, under various cooperative agreements, along with the establishment of the appropriate links to events and biographies.

### **Establishment of a new database**

The rapid development of the World Wide Web was perhaps the main instigating factor when the institute began to rethink its procedures around 1995 for archiving data and develop an adaptable digital archive to meet the changing requirements.

The institute had several databases at that time. In some cases there were structural problems. The records of the same item document found in the different databases were not given in a uniform way.

Some of the tentative requirements of the new system were the following:

- \* Link all the associated matters found into the single database.
- \* Store and provide search facilities for long text documents as well.
- \* Include the audio-visual documents.
- \* Allow very fine tuning of the accessibility of the database and entitlements to use it.
- \* Allow some of the data to be public, or even available on the Web.
- \* Enable statistics to be produced from the database without the user seeing any specific records (to protect personal rights).

With these and many other, similar requirements in mind, the institute began in 1996 to develop a database based on Oracle software and transfer the data to it. It was found during these operations that there was no established practice for describing, examining or storing the various kinds of document. The basic concept adopted was to choose the structure that allowed the broadest description to be made, in which some of the data need not be given.

Data did not simply reach the database by being entered, within the institute. With the bibliographical data on books and articles, existing descriptions were imported using MARC format, before institute staff subjected them to further processing (linking them with events and persons, for instance). In the absence of a standard, the same procedure was adopted with some descriptions of photographs as well. Cooperation with other institutes and archives meant that data could be entered once, jointly. The sources for compiling them could be provided jointly, rather than the institute having to buy the data. (For instance, some of the photo documentation in the database is being developed further in conjunction with the Budapest Archives, in other words, part of it is shared.)

The database operated and compiled in this way assists in the work of the 1956 Institute in two main ways: database support for research and database support for publication.

### **Database support for research**

Researchers can have access to data entered by institute staff. The database can be used in the same way by everyone, rather than being dependent on special recording procedures. Unfortunately, there is a long way to go before the database entirely replaces the card indexes. Not every researcher possesses a research notebook computer, and some of the data unearthed is still jealously guarded by researchers. However, I think this will change. The stocks of libraries and archives are being digitized at an increasing rate, so that even if the whole is not available, some description of each item can be found on computer, and often in a restricted form on the Web as well. So the decisive factor in finding the right document increasingly becomes the ability to compose good search questions, rather than chance. Furthermore, the 1956 Institute is among several places developing intelligent software that is able to search for intelligent information on local databases and on the Internet. Then it can deliver this information to potential users based on user behaviour and the questions that have been formulated. This forms part of the knowledge-processing procedures for the social sciences (which will not spread so fast, of course, as they have in the commercial sphere). This is the direction pointed by the demand by researchers that the data (from which certain conclusions can be drawn) should be fully accessible, so that statements based on them can be verified, or altered as subsequent information emerges. However, this conflicts with the requirement that research findings and source data should be kept secret.

The Internet allows researchers to make use of more than one database. Cooperating institutions can compile databases jointly or open their databases to each others' researchers. These days particularly, the discovery of successive new potential sources of data must be expected. I am thinking here, for instance, of the potential role of corporate archives or of the opening of party and state-

security archives in the former socialist countries. The archives of the Gauck Office in Germany and the Bureau of History in Hungary, for example, are being rapidly explored.

The second way the new database helps researchers is by giving support for publication activities.

#### **Database support for publication activities**

The findings of the research done at the 1956 Institute appear in a variety of publications. Even with a printed publication, it is a great help in preparing the chronology or bibliography, for instance, if the draft text can be compiled from searches in a database that always represents the most up-to-date situation. This applies still more if each item has to be arranged from several points of view.

Meanwhile several new media have appeared in the information society. These, in my view, do not replace the old media (books and films), but for certain purposes, a CD-ROM or a Web site capable of presenting audio-visual information may be more appropriate than printed publications. This is the case, for instance, with encyclopaedic publications containing large volumes of textual data, in which database handlers are the only means of making a rapid, detailed search. It also applies to works that set out to present a period of history in the most comprehensive possible way (including the arts, way of life, historical characters and so on).

It is important to prepare publications of this kind. Computers and Web usage are part of everyday life for the generation growing up today. We cannot forego the opportunity to convey cultural values and scientific findings through the media they understand best.

It is also imperative for scientific findings to reach the various levels of education. Students need textbooks and teachers need teaching aids. Research institutions also have a responsibility to ensure that information can be transferred rapidly. It is important to have rapid access to the source of authentic, up-to-date information, or to the source with the broadest knowledge of how to obtain it.

The database at the 1956 Institute serves as the basis for all its publication methods and objectives. It lies behind the various publications, including the Internet series on contemporary Hungarian history since 1945, aimed especially at secondary-school students, and the associated, encyclopaedic CD-ROM series for researchers. (The second disc is to appear in 2000 and covers the 1945–56 period.)

The part of the database containing the chronology and the photographic and textual documents will be made accessible by degrees to a limited extent. Rather than remaining a closed database, it will gradually develop and

alter. The photographic database includes TIFF format photo files for press use, which are not freely accessible on the Internet. The aim in the longer term is to cover some of the mounting expense of maintaining and developing the system by charging fees for press use of the photo files. This will call for developments in electronic trading that the institute eagerly awaits.

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# Web-Based Data Enter Classrooms in Countries in Transition: The UNICEF National Program of Education for Development in Slovakia

## Introduction

The area of education has been a priority of the Slovak Committee for UNICEF's National Plan of Activities since its beginning, dating back to the independence of the Slovak Republic as a sovereign nation on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1993.

*by Dr. Dusan Soltes \**

In this respect the main goal has been to contribute as much as possible to the whole educational process in Slovakia in such a way that education would become one of the driving forces of the country's transition to the multiparty democracy, functioning market economy, economic prosperity, social justice and a modern society with a due respect for human rights as it has been in all developed countries of the world. One of the common denominators of these challenging tasks of education has been to prepare the young generation for the future integration of the country into the systems of regional and global systems and in particular to the European Union. For the young people themselves it means to prepare them for their future role as full-fledged citizens of the future unified Europe with the same rights, duties, but also opportunities, as have their pals in the current European Union.

In this respect, the UNICEF world-wide „Education for Development“ (EFD) programme, part of UNESCO's „Education for All“, another global education programme, has become a welcomed source of know how and an efficient vehicle for our national activities in the area of education.

In the following parts of this paper we will be dealing in more details with some aspects but also problems of implementation of the EFD world-wide program in the specific conditions of the Slovak Republic as one of the countries in the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) in transition.

## Some Background Information on the General Context for the Implementation of the EFD in Slovakia within Other CEE Countries in Transition

In Slovakia, as in all other CEE countries, the process of implementation of the EFD started in the early 90s, before 1993, as a part of the federal programme of the former Czechoslovak Federal Republic, and later as a part of its particular National Program. In this respect, the main

development objectives of the EFD have been to contribute as much as possible to achieving the following main objectives of the whole transition process in relation to the young generation and its preparation for a proper understanding and active support and readiness for the following main goals:

- To establish a democratic, multiparty parliamentary system which would replace the former system of the one-party domination;
- To create a civic society with the due respect for human rights, rights of children, minorities, etc. and general equality of all citizens irrespective of their national background, gender, social status, etc.;
- To develop an efficient modern market economy securing a social and economic justice and thus giving the same chances for all in a fair competition on a market similarly as it has already been e.g. in the countries of the European Union;
- To carry out modernization, restructuring, privatization and liberalization of all processes of the economic development internally and externally with the vital assistance of the know how and investments from the developed world and especially from the European Union;
- To overcome a long-year isolation from the outside world and to establish and develop new dimensions of a global as well as regional and cross-border cooperation, communication and trade; and
- To overcome even more evident isolation and underdevelopment in the field of the freedom and free flow of information, media, ideas but also a free movement of persons, etc.

In general, as it could be summed up, the main objective of the whole transition and the corresponding preparation of the young generation have been to prepare the whole country, and especially young people, for the future membership in the European Union and in other European and transnational integration structures.



This main objective has found its direct expression among others also in the so-called „Copenhagen criteria“ as a criteria to be met by all candidates countries from the CEE before they could become members of the European Union (EU). The substance of these criteria are as follows:

- Stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, a rule of law, human rights and a respect for rights of minorities;
- Functioning market economy and ability to withstand the pressure of competition and market forces; and
- Ability to take over obligations of the membership (in the EU) as well as dedication to the objectives of the political, economic and monetary union.

These main objectives, goals and criteria for the whole socio-economic development of the countries in transition have of course directly effected not only their whole further development but even more the whole system of education. It is then no surprise that also some articles of the particular association treaties between the EU and the countries in transition including Slovakia have directly been dedicated to the development and harmonization of education, to the technical and financial assistance in transforming the whole system of education according to the standards of the EU.

In this respect, the importance of education and, in particular, education for development has become even more important as it has to prepare the young generation for becoming citizens of the EU in equality with the same rights but also qualifications as needed for achieving such a challenging goal. Just for illustration, one of the four basic freedoms i.e. the free movement of persons is unthinkable without a mutual recognition of qualification, education certificates, diplomas, without a good knowledge of foreign languages, etc.

In general, the countries in transition and their education for development programs have to some respect, very similar or even identical features with the developed countries, such as:

- No illiteracy and the general level of education is relatively high and available for free to the whole population;
- No widespread poverty, famine, malnutrition and/or starvation of children or young people as it is existing in some developing countries;
- A relatively still good standard of medical services, hygiene and thus overall living conditions;

- No child work or other forms of exploitation of children;
- No discrimination due to the gender, race, religion, etc.; and
- No armed conflicts, violence or other similar hardship circumstances which would be directly negatively effecting the life and education opportunities of young people.

On the other hand it is fair to mention that there are also some specific conditions and/or features which to some extent differ the countries in transition from the developed countries of the EU and make them a relatively special group of countries regarding their education systems as e.g.:

- A relatively lower level of the overall socio-economic development which in the terms of the GDP per capita represents only about 20-50% of the average of the EU.
- Due to the above low level of the development, most of the countries in transition have not yet – even after the ten year period - achieved their pre-transition level of the year 1989.
- It is quite evident that there has not been enough budget resources for any significant development of education in general not to mention its pro-development orientation, innovations, etc.
- The curricula at all levels of schools have not yet been fully corresponding to the needs of the challenges of the contemporary modern education methods, techniques, etc. There is an evident lack of modern didactic and computing technology. Thus in the whole system of education has been prevailing an extensive system of memorizing instead of applying a modern principle of „learning by doing and doing while learning“ e.g. in relation to the utilization of modern information technologies, foreign languages labs, etc.
- There is a lack of qualified teachers for some subjects related e.g. to foreign languages, information technologies, but also to human rights, civic society, etc.; and a lack of development issues in the national curriculum, a lack of alternative education, variability, etc.

In the specific conditions of Slovakia as a new independent nation, we have – in addition – to take into account that all these common development issues have been further effected by the necessity to solve some specific problems related to the new country i.e. to develop the necessary

institutional framework, to introduce a new national curriculum better corresponding to its new statehood, independent identity, etc.

### **Preparation Of The National EFD Program In Slovakia**

In addition to the above general regional context of an economic and social transition as well as some specifics of Slovakia as a new country, the whole process of preparation of the National Program for the EFD has been a rather complex and relatively long-term process.

In order to contribute as much as possible to this process, the Slovak National Committee for UNICEF has been very active in supporting the rights for education as an integral part of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child and its implementation and monitoring in Slovakia. Among various other activities in support of their implementation, the National Committee for UNICEF has – during the ten year period since its adoption – conducted two Situation Analyses viz. in years 1995 and in 1999.

The first one in 1995 was the very first of that kind of analysis of children in the independent Slovak Republic. The second one was conducted in 1998-1999, and completed in the year of the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention.

The second analysis in the area of education has shown that in spite of some progress achieved in comparison with the results of the similar analysis in 1995, there are still areas where the progress in the field of education has not been as expected. According to the individual conclusions and recommendations from the previous analysis, the achieved status in 1999 according to the particular situation analysis has been as follows:

- There still has not been prepared a long-term national strategy for education with the time horizon for next 10-20 years which would reflect the needs for preparation of the young generation for the future membership of Slovakia in the EU with the horizon for accession in years 2004-5 or shortly afterwards;
- Accordingly, also the process of transformation of individual levels of education has been proceeding relatively slowly and as a consequence there has been a growing number of unemployed graduates of individual types of schools. Among others it is also one of the indicators that their qualification has not fully corresponded to the needs of the current labour market. For example the trend in unemployed graduates of different types of high schools has increased from 11.4%, 17.9%, 7.2% in 1994 to 15.02%, 22.63%, 8.23% in 1997 and has a tendency to grow further. In the case of university graduates it has increased even more dramatically from 3.0% in 1994 to 13.2% in 1997 and it is mostly due to the lack of

structural adjustments of education to the needs of the labour market;

- There has not been achieved any significant progress in bringing the modern information and computing technology into the schools, classrooms, etc. The situation has to some extent even become worse now than before as the available computers are mostly older types unsuitable for the current networking opportunities, do not have parameters for modern software packages, etc. The whole this process has been negatively effected mainly by two reasons:

- the lack of funding for the procurement of the modern information technology; and

- the lack of qualified teachers and instructors for the particular subjects as they find much better financial and career opportunities outside the education system and in particular in the newly arising private sector.

- The harmonization of the legislation in the area of education with the legislation of the EU has been in progress but to some extent it has been negatively effected by the fact that Slovakia has not yet been selected for the direct accession negotiations with the EU. It is possible to expect that the Helsinki summit of the EU in December 1999 and a subsequent start of the particular accession negotiations also with Slovakia will bring the necessary acceleration also to this important problem area if we realize that pupils of current elementary schools could complete their high-school and/or university education already as citizens of the EU and to find their full utilization on the particular common labour market.

- In the area of the development of the alternative education only very little has been achieved in comparison with the results of the situation analysis of 1995. The main problem has again been a lack of funding. Some progress has been achieved in the extension of the network of schools according to individual sectors and/or type of ownership (state, private, religious) or according to the main language of instruction, etc., but the further development has again been negatively effected by the worsening social and financial situation of the society as many families could hardly afford to pay for the high-school education at a private school, etc. A specific case of an alternative education regarding the minority education has not succeeded due to the objections of some minorities as they did not realize that improving their knowledge of the official language of the country could improve their chances for employment on the more and more competitive labour market.

- In spite of various mainly budgetary problems so far it has been successfully secured that the whole system of education for the young generation has been free and thus the particular right as stipulated in the Convention on the Rights of Child has fully been respected. But there has already been an existing trend to introduce some nominal fees for some kinds of schools, first of all at the university levels what to some extent could mean a kind of discrimination for students from social weaker families.

- The same situation as in the case of education in modern information technologies has been in the education of foreign languages i.e. the lack of funding for establishing modern foreign languages labs and the lack of qualified lecturers, teachers, instructors, etc. who again are lured by much better conditions in the private sector. Thus, a big part of classes has to be carried out by external teachers what to some extent negatively effects the standard of the whole education. One solution could be to invite foreign instructors who are quite interested to come also to Slovakia, but unfortunately the particular employment legislation regarding foreigners is so complex and unfavorable to foreign instructors that finally they usually start their assignments in the neighboring countries.

- In general, the situation in the foreign languages education has not improved but rather deteriorated in comparison with the past as now about one third of pupils of elementary schools have no foreign language classes at all. In the past at least Russian has been a foreign language available for every pupil. Now, one third of pupils of elementary schools has no such opportunity although otherwise there is formally much more opportunities to choose among six foreign languages (English, French, German, Russian, Spanish, Italian), but again the problem is with the availability of teachers.

- As we have already mentioned, one of the main problems of education has been a lack of qualified teachers. This problem has been further deteriorating. Not only that teachers have been underpaid and thus forced to seek better opportunities for employment in other sectors but even under such unfavorable conditions, there has been another threat to teachers. Under the current plans of the government to reduce the state administration by 10%, the same reduction has to apply also to all types of schools. Such a reduction would of course effect also teachers and especially those of the older generation i.e. those who in many cases are the only teaching staff as it is not at all attractive for young graduates to become teachers.

- One of the negative outcomes from the last Situation analysis has been the fact that Slovakia has

still been one of the countries that has not yet introduced a post of an Ombudsman for monitoring the rights of children including those for education.

In view of the above problems of the existing system of education in Slovakia as revealed by the last Situation Analysis conducted by the Slovak Committee for UNICEF, the following main conclusions and recommendations for the further development of the EFD have been formulated, which at the same time are also the main challenges for education in the forthcoming 21<sup>st</sup> century in general:

- To prepare and implement as soon as possible a comprehensive national strategy for the education on the principles of the Education for All and for Development and as a part of the system of the whole-life education process;

- To harmonize the education system according to the standards, rules and regulations in the countries of the EU and thus prepare the whole education system for its place in the unified Europe. It concerns not only of the legislation, organization but also of all budget and financial implications, a direct support for research and development in the area of education;

- To participate actively in all education programs of the EU as e.g. TEMPUS, SOCRATES, LEONARDO, YOUTH FOR EUROPE, etc. and create all necessary conditions for the maximal mobility of teachers and students with the countries of the EU;

- To introduce and develop all kinds of European studies and thus to support the knowledge and true feeling of the common european identity, history, culture, cooperation, etc.;

- To develop and further promote all forms of education in the areas of human rights, child rights, minority rights, etc. as cornerstones of the common European citizenship, free movement of persons, etc.;

- To maximize education, practical training and utilization of the modern information and communications technologies in all types of schools as there is already now existing an evident handicap in comparison with the situation in the EU. Especially, it is necessary to enable young people an unrestricted access to Internet and thus participate in various world-wide educational programs such as a Voice of Youth, etc.;

- To promote and further develop education in various global issues such as environmental protection, a healthy life style without drugs, smoking, alcoholism, protection against sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS, etc. To the same category also

belongs education in the field of international cooperation and understanding and against any forms of intolerance, xenophobia, racism, stereotypes and prejudices in relation to other cultures, nations, etc.;

- To prepare the young generation in such a way that every young person will be able to master at least one of the official languages of the EU and in particular English as a language of the current globalization; and

- To modernize the whole educational system in the direction towards its further differentiation and pluralism, free and individual choice for an educational pattern, a whole-the-life education and an active participation of citizens and especially parents in the education of their children, etc.

### Conclusion

In order to actively contribute to the implementation of the above challenging tasks, the Slovak Committee for UNICEF has also launched - in cooperation and with funding from the Regional Office for CEE/CIS and the Baltics of the UNICEF Geneva - its CMIS - Computerized Monitoring Information System in the area of Education as one of the projects commemorating the 10th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child. Technically, the CMIS project has been designed, developed and implemented at the Department of Information System of the Faculty of Management of the Comenius University at Bratislava. Primarily, it has been formulated as a system for monitoring of the rights of minorities for education in the Slovak Republic, but, as a modern www based system (<http://www.fm.uniba.sk/projekty/cmis>), it is open and available for monitoring of the rights for education in general. In addition to this, its main monitoring oriented development and implementation strategy, it is also, at the same time, a system which is directly serving various EFD-related goals:

- To enable young people a practical use of the modern computing and communication technology in the environment of the contemporary WWW;

- To use that technology for monitoring their own rights not only in education but also in general according to the particular Convention on the Rights of Child and thus to contribute to their knowledge in that area;

- To learn directly about the situation regarding the same rights in other countries and thus to better understand the current globalized and ever more inter-related world and overcome some of existing stereotypes, misunderstandings, etc.

- To communicate directly with their partners in foreign countries and thus in many cases to acquire practical experiences in establishing and developing their own „foreign relations“, to increase their knowledge on globalization, on the world and foreign countries, foreign cultures, etc.; and

- To have an opportunity for practical utilization and improvement of their skills in foreign language modern on-line communications, etc.

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# Making Qualitative Research Material Reusable: Case in Finland

The Finnish Social Science Data Archive (FSD) is a national resource centre for social science research and teaching. It started operating as a separate unit within the University of Tampere in the beginning of 1999. As in other data archives, the main task of the FSD is to increase the use of existing social science data by disseminating it. The main

functions include acquiring, storing and disseminating data for secondary research. In the beginning, the FSD will concentrate on storing numerical data but in the future information services will also cover qualitative data.

This paper gives background information on the reasons why data archive information services in Finland will also cover qualitative data. To make this understandable I shall first give a short history of qualitative research methods in Finland and their position here. After that I take a look at perspectives and problems in the reuse of qualitative data in Finland. Since I am a sociologist, the focus is on social sciences and the approach is characterised by my own discipline.

## Qualitative social research in Finland

In the beginning of the last century it was typical in social sciences to use many kinds of data. Official statistics, newspaper articles, and stories told by the people who were being studied as well, could form the basis of analyses. A remarkable example of combining data is one of our classic studies carried out by Heikki Waris in the 1930's. First he collected and analysed statistics and figures on living conditions of the working class in Helsinki - the capital of Finland. In the second phase of his research, he actually walked into the area inhabited by workers and observed and interviewed the people there so that he would be able to understand how these working class people really lived (Waris 1932).

This celebrated study, using both quantitative and qualitative data, did not, however, become any particular lodestar for the methodology of social sciences during the decades that followed. Taking a look at the methodological literature of the 1950's and the 1960's it is quite clear that statistical methods were in the mainstream though qualitative methods had their small share, too. For sociology's part, however, it can be claimed that almost all

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*by Arja Kuula\**

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the traditions of qualitative research were broken during those decades (Leskinen 1995). Social scientists were fascinated by survey-methods which eventually became, at least in Finland, the scientific method in social sciences from the late 1940's to the early 1970's.

The 1970's marked a turning point in social sciences in Finland. Survey methods were criticised for being ideologically obscure. It was claimed that using concepts like 'universe' or 'analysing unit' just brought to mind an idea of an individual as the subject of his/her actions. And that certainly was not the idea of society in the political and economic theory of Karl Marx. In the 1970's, it was Marxism that laid the foundation or canon for what constituted being a researcher in an acceptable way in Finland. In those days, Marxism marked the boundaries between theoretical research and positivism. The use of survey methods was reckoned as not being theoretical but positivist (Töttö 1997). This did not mean that survey methods would have been totally banned and vanished. The majority of empirical studies in sociology were still based on quantitative data. But they were not in the forefront. Ironically, one could say that, when writing an article in the Finnish journal *Sociology* after mid 1970's, you would not have put a single table in it without a careful deliberation.

The 1970's was an era of particularly philosophical and theoretical studies in social sciences. And this certainly made the gap yawn between theory and practice or the empirical world. This discrepancy was one of the main reasons for a turn towards using qualitative methods in the late 1970's (Leskinen 1995). Being extremely philosophical and theoretical, social sciences were not capable of producing any methods or instruments for empirical research. Though Marxism left its traces in the first empirical and qualitative studies in sociology, the increasing use of qualitative data and methods was an alternative both to theoretical Marxism and positivism.

When qualitative research methods made their breakthrough, the everyday world was seen as problematic and interesting, and a series of studies were carried out on the way people really lived. Among the most popular study objects were suburbs in big cities and people who were the first generation residents there. We have in Finland a



couple of remarkable examples of studies concentrating on the transformation of gender roles of women and men especially, when the mode of production changed in families after moving to cities from agrarian areas. It was shown how important work and everyday living conditions were when men constructed their masculine identity and what happened when the foundations of that identity were changed after moving to cities (Kortteinen 1982).

In the late 1970's and early 1980's researchers using qualitative approach all seemed to face challenges which looked as if they were personal and unique. Besides in-depth interviews on everyday life, in the social sciences we had examples of semiotic studies of culture, anthropology, psychoanalytic studies using qualitative data and participative strategies. But there was no specific paradigm of qualitative research - unless the naturalistic or realistic attitude towards data is thought as one. Everyone had to find his or her own solutions to methodological problems. Usually, the data were gathered through interviews, and the problem of data distortion when interviewing was solved by triangulating them by other sources of data or using humanistic methods. By this I mean that researchers spent a lot of time with the people who were studied. Becoming almost a friend with them was thought to guarantee the truthfulness of the data. Friends do not betray or pretend, as we know...

### **Process of establishment**

The late 1970's were in many ways a very successful period which saw the establishment of using qualitative methods in social sciences in Finland. It can be summarised into three different stages of discussion, or discourse, which can be found in other countries, too (Kvale 1989, Eskola & Suoranta 1998). The first one - which still continues in some countries - was the legitimisation discourse which concentrated on questions like "Are there research questions that allow or even demand using qualitative methods?" - or "Can research based on qualitative data be scientific at all?" This discourse died down at least 15 years ago. Social scientists no longer quarrel about this. Qualitative and quantitative data and methods are seen equally valuable and important in the studies on social life.

The second discourse is a bit more complicated and it is still going on. Since it concerns the nature of research findings in social sciences it can be said to belong to philosophy of science. This discussion or battle, which followed soon after the first studies, focused on data as a text to be analysed and not as unproblematic information about the world under inspection. To put it simply, it can be described as a battle between relativism and objectivism, or perhaps as a battle between researchers who concentrate on culture and those who concentrate on structure. The third way to put it is to say that it is a discussion between social constructionism and realism. Constructionists are accused of concentrating on texts instead of important and real

societal questions. Those who consider interviews as a source of information on the world being studied - i.e. realists - are accused of being unproblematic romanticists.

The third stage in this establishment process has been going on for years too. This discourse concentrates on the foundations of qualitative methods of analysis. This debate is going on mainly among researchers using qualitative methods. In this discourse researchers do not concentrate on questions like "is qualitative research science at all?" etc. It is more important to improve the conduct of studies. That means developing and elaborating background theories, analysing principles, techniques etc.

Today, qualitative methods have a remarkably established position in the Finnish social sciences. For instance, if you come to study social sciences at the University of Tampere, the home of the FSD, you have to take a compulsory course not only in quantitative methods but also one in qualitative methods. In the academic year 2000-2001, first year students will have an introduction course on such areas as theory of rhetoric, narratology, action research, discourse analysis, conversation analysis and ethnography. In doctoral studies of sociology, the majority of the method courses concentrate on qualitative methods. Taking a look at all the method courses available you may even say that in social sciences qualitative methods constitute the mainstream in Finland.

This peculiar state of methodological affairs in Finland is one important reason why the Finnish Social Science Data Archive also focuses on information services for qualitative research. The FSD is planning to develop, together with other actors, a nation-wide net resource to support method teaching in social sciences as a practical example of adapting to the situation. It will facilitate, especially, the use of quantitative methods and research materials in academic teaching, but it will also contain material on teaching and using qualitative methods. Already we have a couple of excellent examples of combining quantitative and qualitative methods in doctoral theses, and more are on the way. We suppose that combining methods will become much more common in the future and that this will also mean changes in the demands for social science data archives.

### **Perspectives and problems of archiving qualitative data in Finland**

In spite of having an established position in qualitative research and also a broad and continuously broadening spectrum of Finnish method books, we do not have any traditions of sharing, reusing, let alone archiving qualitative data. When thinking of the amount of research that has already been carried out and of the research projects which are going on these days in Finland, there is a huge waste of qualitative research resources. We have not done any surveys or interviews on questions of sharing and reusing

qualitative data, but, judging by informal conversations, there is no doubt that researchers find it not only interesting but also very important.

The application of qualitative research methods defines our official strategy at the Finnish Social Science Data Archive: to promote reuse and documentation of qualitative data. The Archive plans to develop and maintain a database, of available qualitative data, which can be reused. It seems that there are quite a few practical problems though. First of all, until recently we did not have any official fixed storage facilities for qualitative data in Finland. This means that researchers have stored their data (if they still have their data) in their offices, or perhaps at home, maybe in the attic of their house; or maybe they have ended up taking it to their summer cottage where there seems to be space enough for things not needed anymore. Luckily we are living in the era of cd-players so the old tapes are not anymore in danger of being recorded over by contemporary pop music. Our own archive - the FSD - is meant for storing numerical and electronic data and there is not room for papers, cassettes, videotapes or anything which would need a lot of space.

Besides not having storage facilities, we do not have common principles of collecting, organising, indexing and documenting qualitative data; or to be more precise, principles vary according to university, discipline, research project, or sometimes even according to the researcher. That does not mean that researchers would not be strict and careful when doing research. We just have many different ways of being thorough and careful. For instance, researchers have their personal ways of indexing recorded videotapes. One of our duties is to develop, set, and propagate principles of collecting, documenting and organising qualitative data so that the data can be used by other researchers afterwards. When establishing documentation principles of qualitative data, we have to consider applying common principles to storing of qualitative data in universities, or specially designated archives, under the guidance of the National Archive, to alleviate researchers of the responsibility for finding a location for research material which is not used anymore.

When discussing possible archiving in the future, one problem which most of the researchers mention is the question of confidentiality and informed consent. This is perhaps one of the most important questions irrespective of the country in question. In connection with interviews, Finnish researchers do not usually use written informed consent which would be signed by the persons under study, but they often do promise not to disseminate the data, and that is as binding as a written contract. Questions of confidentiality and informed consent need also common principles; even though, there will always be some kinds of qualitative data which are not possible to reuse due to their delicate nature. The policies and principles of

confidentiality will be settled in co-operation with university researchers and with several authorities responsible for these issues. These consultations will be the basis for setting rules of access and undertaking conditions of reuse of qualitative research material. We need to have common principles - perhaps as recommendations - of collecting, processing, organising and documenting qualitative data in a way that would enable a reuse of the data. To succeed in this we need also to co-operate with the main research funding organisations.

In the future we hope to be the advising partner in negotiations over the undertakings for conditions of reuse of qualitative material, even though the responsibility for the decision of granting access to the data lies with the principal investigators who have the kind of data which can be reused. The FSD will document but not store qualitative data unless it is in electronic form and without problems in view of matters related with confidentiality. It is our duty, however, to make recommendations for depositing or storing policies in the university departments. As a data archive we think it is a matter of course to catalogue also qualitative data which can be reused and inform about it through the internet and perhaps other media, too - regardless of where the data is actually stored.

Finnish researchers are interested in the reuse of qualitative data, although the idea of organising and documenting their own data for reuse by someone else is not very interesting and tempting to them. Without common principles of collecting and documenting qualitative data, it might be that at times the burden of resources needed to make old material available for others outweighs the benefits of potential re-use. We can certainly start by trying to get some of the most significant qualitative material created in the past couple of decades; but realistically, the real potential of collecting qualitative data which would be available for others, lies in the current and future research projects. If we succeed in our work, there will be common principles for indexing and documenting qualitative material as well as guidelines for phrasing the introductory sections of interviews so that other researchers could use them, too. For the process of documenting and cataloguing qualitative data, we plan to be able to use some of the information elements which are already used in the new data documentation standards. In addition, we may have to develop some new information elements and elaborate some of the existing ones to meet the special requirements of qualitative data. It would be excellent if the objective of documentation of qualitative data would be achieved through co-operation between different archives.

In the future - perhaps even now - the Internet can be seen as a media for moving and exchanging both qualitative and quantitative material. A lot of qualitative material is already in machine-readable form. Knowing the possibilities of image scanning and digitising technologies, one can only

imagine the future prospects and possibilities of archiving qualitative data. This vision and its actualisation can only contribute to the main task of data archives: enhancing sensible use of all research resources.

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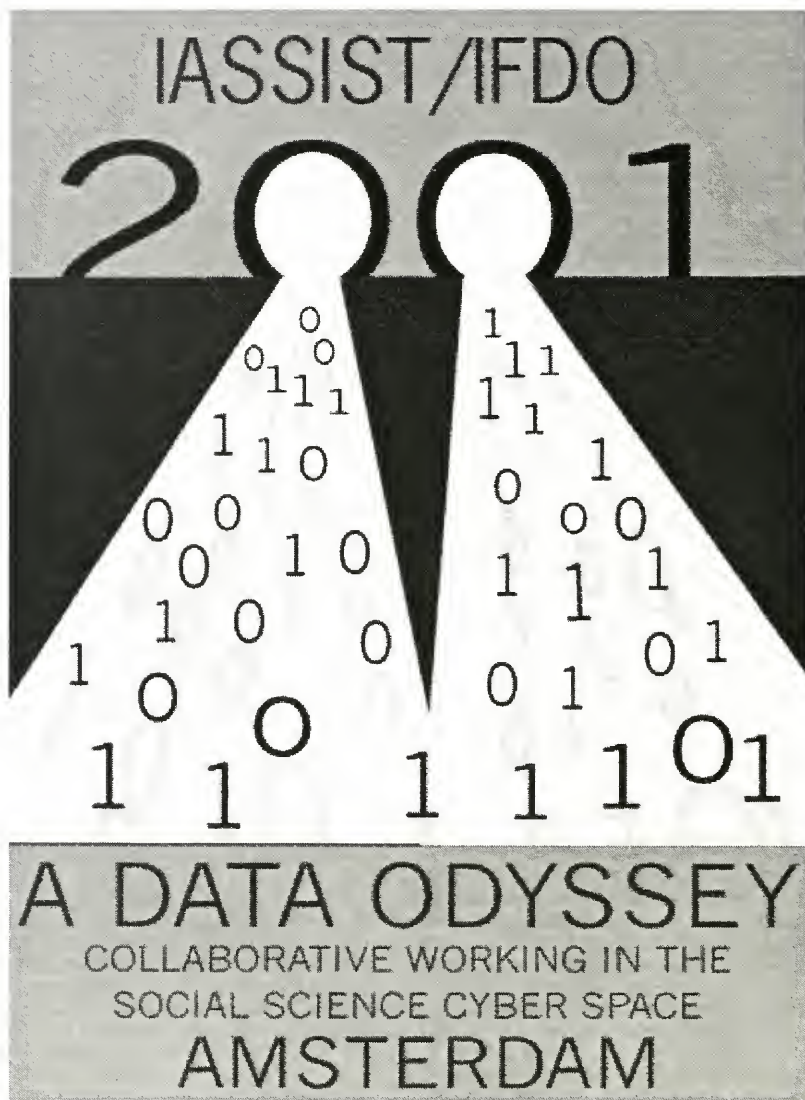
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## Collaborative Working in the Social Science CyberSpace

The International Association for Social Science Information Services and Technology (IASSIST) will hold its 27th annual conference with the International Federation of Data Organizations (IFDO) from May 14 - 19, 2001.

The conference will be convened in Amsterdam, capital of The Netherlands.

This year's conference emphasizes the need for co-operation on technical and organizational matters, and of course on contents.

IASSIST conferences bring together data professionals, data producers, and data analysts from around the world who are engaged in the creation, acquisition, processing, maintenance, distribution, preservation, and use of numeric social science data for research and instruction.

IFDO was established in 1977 in response to advanced research needs of the international social science community. IFDO stimulates to co-ordinate worldwide data services and thus enhance social science research.

Our conference title makes reference to a mythical story of a journey rich in challenge, danger and reward. Unlike those in the epic Odyssey, we cannot call on the help of gods, we have to solve the problems ourselves. IASSIST is the professional body that exists to foster co-operation among 'data workers' in their quest for data, connecting those who seek data with those who produce data through sharing between data archives and data libraries.

During the last quarter of the 20th Century, IASSIST has held its annual international conference in Europe about every four years. IASSIST will do so again, this time in Amsterdam in collaboration with IFDO. Join us in millennium mood, eager to chart the way through the mysteries of the virtual environment, assisting those who seek to discover and locate data, for research or teaching, to reap their just reward.

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## Membership form

The International Association for Social Science Information Services and Technology (IASSIST) is an international association of individuals who are engaged in the acquisition, processing, maintenance, and distribution of machine readable text and/or numeric social science data. The membership includes information system specialists, data base librarians or administrators, archivists, researchers, programmers, and managers. Their range of interests encompasses hard copy as well as machine readable data

Paid-up members enjoy voting rights and receive the IASSIST QUARTERLY. They also benefit from reduced fees for attendance at regional

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